

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1949, WESTERN EUROPE, VOLUME IV

840.20/3-1149

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State

TOP SECRET

[WASHINGTON,] March 11, 1949.

Participants:	Mr. Rasmussen, Foreign Minister of Denmark
	Mr. Kauffmann, Ambassador of Denmark
	Mr. Hvass, Danish Foreign Office
	The Secretary
	Mr. Bohlen, Counselor
	Mr. Hickerson, Director, EUR
	Mr. Hulley, Chief, NOE

I welcomed the Foreign Minister to Washington, expressed my great pleasure at the opportunity which his visit affords us to exchange ideas about the North Atlantic Pact, and assured him that my time is entirely at his disposal. After this preliminary talk he could have a discussion, with several of my associates tomorrow, and another meeting with me on Monday or Tuesday at his pleasure.

The Foreign Minister said he would like to outline briefly what was in his mind. The Danish Government had made a whole-hearted attempt to reach an agreement with Sweden and Norway for a Scandinavian defense pact. All political parties except the Communists gave full support to this plan which seemed to them the best solution for Denmark's defense problem. There was wide-spread disappointment that it had not been possible to reach such an agreement with the other two countries. Now Denmark has but two choices, either unprotected isolation or joining up with the West. Five-sixths of the Lower House and nine-tenths of the Upper House are in favor of joining the North Atlantic alliance. However, the Government wants a broader support from public opinion as well as from Parliament, where it wants as much support as can be gained from two small parties which do not yet favor the Pact. He was not taking into consideration the Communists, who hold only nine of the 150 seats in Parliament.

There were some questions he would have to answer when he got back to Denmark. In the first place, was the North Atlantic Pact in complete harmony with the United Nations Charter and was its purpose solely defensive and peaceful?

I said that the drafters had leaned over backwards to keep the treaty closely in line with the United Nations Charter. Besides using many phrases from the Charter and making references to it, provision is made for reports to the Security Council. He would see from the text that the purpose is purely defensive and peaceful and when we are able to publish it in a few days I thought this question would be clearly answered.

He asked whether all Danish territory would be covered, i.e., Bornholm, [Page 194] the Faroes, and Greenland; and whether any bases on Danish home territory were contemplated. I replied that all the Danish territory he had named would be covered by the treaty, and that we do not contemplate that any bases will be required in Denmark proper.

He said he had a list of Danish requirements toward defense with him which he would like to go over with officers in the Department. He asked whether we could give any indication of the arms assistance which might be supplied to Denmark and whether if Denmark received a dollar allotment for its defense under the contemplated legislation, it would be possible to expend any of this allotment in countries other than the United States. He had in mind orders already placed by Denmark for aircraft from Britain and anti-aircraft from Sweden. I said it was not possible to be specific on arms questions until we had progressed further in our planning and in fact until we knew the outcome of congressional action on the arms legislation which is now being drafted. His latter question had simply not been considered as yet, but it might be put to Mr. Gross tomorrow for his comments.

He asked whether Denmark would be obliged to declare war or to send defense troops if outlying areas such as Alaska were attacked. I answered by citing Article 4 which provides for consultation of the parties and Article 5 which provides that in case of armed attack each party will assist the party so attacked by taking such action, including the use of armed force, as it deems necessary to restore and maintain the security of the area. I explained the thought underlying these articles and said that it was clear from the wording that the final decision on his question would rest with each member. It was my understanding that there might be circumstances in which it would be preferable for some parties not to declare war in the event of an armed attack but to take other appropriate measures to attain the purposes of the treaty.

DEAN ACHESON

Kilde: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v04/d102> (FRUS, 1949, bind IV, s. 193-94)

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1949, WESTERN EUROPE, VOLUME IV

840.20/3-1249

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor of the Department of State (Bohlen)

TOP SECRET

[WASHINGTON,] March 12, 1949.

Participants:	Mr. Gustav Rasmussen, Foreign Minister of Denmark
	Mr. Henrik de Kauffmann, Ambassador of Denmark
	Mr. Frants Hvass, Danish Foreign Office
	Mr. Povl Bang-Jensen, Counselor, Danish Embassy
	Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Counselor
	Mr. Ernest A. Gross, Assistant Secretary
	Mr. John D. Hickerson, Director, EUR
	Mr. Theodore C. Achilles, Chief, WE
	Mr. Benjamin M. Hulley, Chief, NOE
	Mr. Gray Bream, NOE

Foreign Minister Rasmussen said he would first like to discuss the text of the Atlantic Pact, the March 5 edition¹ having been substantially reported to him by his Ambassador. He stressed the importance to Denmark of underlining in the Preamble the peaceful objectives of the Pact. He commented that Article II does not provide for improved relations with countries outside the Pact. I observed that we do not consider this Article as exclusive or that it implies other than good relations with nations not in the Pact. He feared that the phrase in Article IV relative to attack on vessels or aircraft might have the result of giving rise to a state of war when only an incident was involved. I explained that we did not think an incident would result in war and I cited the bombing of the *Panay*² as an illustration. The parties would consult in case of any kind of attack and would judge from the circumstances how serious it might be. As he has understood from our Senate debates, the Treaty does not provide for automatic entry into the war. He took up my reference to consultation and asked how quickly it could take place in case of a deliberate attack on Denmark. I pointed out that consultation is not required before parties take action under Article V and that if the facts of an aggressive attack were obvious, each nation would presumably take steps under Article V without waiting for consultation. Mr. Rasmussen said this point was of primary importance to Denmark which feels it is most vulnerable. I said that we regard the Treaty primarily as a restrictive force. We want a potential aggressor to know that it would have to

engage the full strength of the United States and Britain if it attacked any of the parties and we believe that this will deter an aggressor [Page 199] from taking over small nations one at a time. He referred to the accession clause in Article X and asked when it would come into effect. I replied that it would be effective as soon as the Treaty goes into force through ratification by the required number of nations. He referred to Article XIII and asked if there were any possibility of any party giving notice before the 20 years were up. I said that this Article had been the idea of the European members and that no country could withdraw before the period of the Treaty had elapsed. Concluding his remarks on the text, he said he had no comments other than these questions as to the meaning.

The Foreign Minister referred to frequent press statements about our frontier being on the Rhine, Pyrenees or somewhere else and said it made a bad impression in Denmark where people concluded that Denmark was written off in advance. I said that these statements emanated from amateur strategists who enjoy this kind of speculation and we are also aware of the unfortunate political effects of such statements. Mr. Gross observed that the signatories are not committed to any strategic plan nor does the Treaty imply that any such plan exists. Mr. Hickerson commented that the Defense Committee under the Pact would discuss strategic possibilities but no attempt has yet been made to say how a war would be fought nor would the Treaty provide this. To his question as to whether any unified command were planned, I said this had not yet been discussed.

He said that he had with him a list of Denmark's military equipment needs which he would like to discuss when convenient. Mr. Gross said he would be glad to arrange a meeting on this for Monday morning. At that time his question about the use of United States funds to purchase supplies in other countries such as Britain and Sweden would be considered as well as we can at our present stage of development.

The Foreign Minister observed that the Danes feel their country is in a very dangerous spot with its border only 30 miles from the Soviet Zone of Germany. His people are not afraid, but there is a latent unrest. He said it would encourage the people if they had some arms, even a token supply, as a psychological booster. He expressed disappointment that his request of a year ago³ brought no result. Mr. Hickerson said he shared this disappointment as he had used his utmost efforts but it turned out that there simply were no surplus Garrand rifles. He hoped that after the legislation was approved some would be found surplus which would be allocated promptly.

[Page 200]

The Foreign Minister then said that the question of Greenland would be raised in the Danish Parliament and he would want to know what to answer. The general view of Denmark on the Treaty of 1941⁴ is that it should have been canceled by now. It was based on the German threat which has disappeared. I said that this was a matter which I thought the Defense Council set up under the Treaty would consider and that the group as a whole rather than the United States would work out the question of defense of the area. Mr. Rasmussen said he thought the Danes had been patient. He even made an oral statement to Ambassador Marvel on the subject a year ago which continues the present status.⁵ There is a latent feeling in Denmark that this was a war-time arrangement and should be abolished. Mr. Hickerson said that we are very grateful for the attitude the Danish Government has shown in this matter. We believe that if Denmark becomes a party to the Pact the group will be able to work out the details. I commented that I thought the Greenland question should be considered in the framework of the Pact as the proper setting in which to settle the question of facilities in Greenland. Ambassador Kauffmann commented that in his view one of the benefits which Denmark would derive from the Pact is that it would facilitate a solution of the Greenland question. The Foreign Minister said it would be valuable to the Danish

Government for domestic reasons if he could make a statement in Parliament that Greenland would be used purely for defensive facilities and not as a bastion for attack. Mr. Hickerson observed that he had given such assurances to Ambassador Kauffmann sometime ago and that the Danes could inspect the facilities at any time to see that they are entirely defensive. He added that under Article III the whole outlook is defensive and that we think Article IX gives the means for working out the details. The Defense Committee when set up will probably find that defense facilities in Greenland are necessary to defend North America and to get troops over to Europe for defense there. The Committee may decide that the United States will build such facilities as are necessary in Greenland, and that Denmark as a member of the Committee would have the opportunity to pass on what facilities would be necessary. The Foreign Minister asked whether he could be authorized to say something on this in Parliament to the effect that the whole idea is a defensive one as regards Greenland. I said we would see if something could be worked [Page 201] out on the line that the whole purpose of the Pact is defensive. The Foreign Minister explained that he would have to forestall the argument that Denmark has made Greenland available for attack on Russia. Ambassador Kauffmann thought a statement might take the form of citing an assurance given by the Secretary of State and that this would create a favorable impression. I said there might be danger in the United States presuming to speak for all the Pact members, but that we would study this to see if something could be worked out.

Ambassador Kauffmann raised the question as to timing the announcement of the list of countries which would sign, which he understood would be on March 15. Mr. Hickerson said that this had been changed and we now hoped when we publish the text on March 18, to publish also a list of the countries which have been invited and will sign the text. The invitation to Denmark would be forthcoming unless the Foreign Minister indicated that it should not be offered.

CHARLES E. BOHLEN

1. Not identified in Department of State files.
2. For documentation on this occurrence on the Yangtse River in China, December 13, 1937, see [Foreign Relations, 1937, vol. iii, pp. 798 ff.](#)
3. For documentation on Danish requests for military purchases in the United States during 1948, see [Foreign Relations, 1948, vol. iii, pp. 1 ff.](#)
4. For the text of the Agreement between the United States and Denmark respecting the defense of Greenland, signed April 9, 1941, and exchange of notes, see Department of State Executive Agreement Series No. 204, or 55 Stat. (pt 2) 1245, and for related documentation, see [Foreign Relations, 1941, vol. ii, pp. 35 ff.](#)
5. For a report of this conversation of March 11, 1948, see telegram 233, March 12 from Copenhagen, *ibid.*, 1948; vol. iii, p. 587.

Kilde: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v04/d105> (FRUS, 1949, bind IV, s. 198-201)

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1949, WESTERN EUROPE, VOLUME IV

840.20/3-1549

Verbatim Report on a Meeting Between the Secretary of State and the Danish Foreign Minister

TOP SECRET

[WASHINGTON,] March 15, 1949.

Participants:	Mr. Gustav Rasmussen, Danish Foreign Minister
	Mr. Henrik de Kauffmann, Danish Ambassador
	Mr. Frants Hvass, Danish Foreign Office
	Mr. Povl Bang-Jensen, Danish Counselor
	The Secretary
	Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Counselor
	Mr. Ernest A. Gross, Assistant Secretary
	Mr. John D. Hickerson, Director, EUR
	Mr. Benjamin M. Hulley, Chief, NOE

MR. RASMUSSEN: Mr. Secretary, first of all, I would like to thank you very much for the information you gave me the other day and I [\[Page 211\]](#) think it has contributed very substantially to the clarification of our minds, and that it will enable me to give orientation and clarification when I get back to Denmark.

Then, I would also like to express my thanks for the detailed, free and open discussions which we have had with your advisers and officials. These discussions will further enable us to inform the Danish Government fully and give them, I think, all the necessary orientation. As a matter of fact, after these rather lengthy discussions which we have had since I saw you last, I think there are only a very few questions left and, with your permission, I should like to raise them.

MR. ACHESON: Please do.

MR. RASMUSSEN: First, about Greenland. There, of course, the Atlantic Pact will throw a new light on the American-Danish relations as to Greenland. But nevertheless we still have our bilateral agreement from 1941 and the question is left open what to do about it, whether we should seek to

terminate it or whether we should seek to make a new arrangement within the framework of the proposed Atlantic Pact.

I take it that you and your government will adopt a sympathetic attitude toward such Danish wishes which we may put forward in the future. We are convinced that the American Government does not intend to interfere with the Danish administration of Greenland and that the American personnel up there will continue to refrain from having dealings with the native population or attempt to influence them. If you feel able to confirm the correctness of this conception, I should be very glad to hear it.

MR. ACHESON: Well, I am very happy, indeed, to confirm the statement which you have just made.

MR. RASMUSSEN: We also take it, Mr. Acheson, that the American bases in Greenland will not be further enlarged unless in agreement with the Danish Government. Our interest as we see it, is rather to take over gradually more and more establishments in Greenland, as we have in fact already done in the past with meteorological stations.

There is one point in connection with Greenland which will interest the Parliament in Denmark and that is the character of the United States establishments in Greenland. I am sure it would be very welcomed in Denmark if you might authorize me to state, or rather, stress the purely defensive character of the American establishments in Greenland.

MR. ACHESON: Well, I should be very happy to do that, Mr. Minister, and I'd like to make our attitude very clear on that point because [\[Page 212\]](#) it is a most important one. As in the case of bases anywhere within the jurisdiction of the members of the North Atlantic Pact, bases in Greenland would never be used for aggressive purposes. The whole objective of the Pact is defensive, and any military facilities which may be available to the members individually or collectively are intended for use only in resisting aggression. Greenland will not be used as a base for aggression. It will be a part of the area which is to be defended and will also constitute a part of the defenses which may be available for resisting an assault upon the territory of any members of the Pact. It may well be necessary to conduct the defense of the North Atlantic area on a long-range basis in order to resist aggression in any part of the area. Does that make the matter clear?

MR. RASMUSSEN: Yes, that perfectly meets our point. Can I use that statement of yours, that declaration, publicly?

MR. ACHESON: Yes, I should be delighted to have you use it publicly.

MR. RASMUSSEN: It would be most valuable. If I may, then, leave Greenland.

I'd like to say only just a few words upon the requirements of the armament question which we have discussed in detail, very fully, yesterday with Mr. Gross and his collaborators, and with General Lemnitzer. I would only like to stress one thing in this connection, that is, the importance of getting some arms to Denmark at an early date even if it be only in a small quantity as a token or symbolic in nature, but I think that even such a small shipment, in case the whole thing comes off would contribute substantially to soothe the public opinion in Denmark, and I also think it would have a beneficial effect on public opinion in Sweden. But I don't expect you to be able to give any assurance or any promise, I am not attempting to extract that from you because I think I have understood how the political situation is, the constitutional situation, in the States. But I only want to stress this point that I think it would be a very good thing if such a thing would be possible, to send some of the arms which we so sorely need, to send them in the near future.

MR. ACHESON: Well, as I understand the situation at the present time, Mr. Gross, we are not able to give any assurances in advance of action of the Congress on the proposed legislation.

MR. GROSS: That is right, Mr. Secretary. I think that we have covered that rather fully with the Minister in our discussions.

May I add a point? I think what ought to be clear, too, from our discussions is that we are giving very urgent and sympathetic attention to the requirements, we fully realize the desirability of speed in accomplishing transfers. Our hope is that if the Congress does approve the program and authorize the expenditure of funds for the purpose, [Page 213] that we should within the first six months after the Congressional action, assuming that Congress does approve it, be able to accomplish some transfers if only of a token nature. I can't now go into quantity, but it should be possible for us, under those circumstances, at least to make some transfers within a period of months after the program is approved by the Congress.

MR. RASMUSSEN: Yes, I thank you. We discussed it at length yesterday and I think we have understood the position. Of course, we very much appreciate the spirit in which you led these discussions and we have done our best to provide you with the facts as to Danish defense, and we trust that you will deal with the matter in the same spirit of understanding and sympathy which we have had over here the whole time.

And, Mr. Secretary, we just mentioned the other day the advisability of issuing a communiqué and I would very much like to have one issued, but before proceeding to that there are one or two other items which I would just like to mention to you. They are entirely disconnected with what we have been discussing over here and they refer entirely to Danish-American relations. (The Foreign Minister then spoke of shipping problems, reported in a separate memorandum.) (A statement for the press was discussed and agreed to.)

MR. GROSS: When do you think the Parliament will begin debate?

MR. RASMUSSEN: I had a message from my Prime Minister yesterday asking when we could have our Foreign Relations Committee—I hope we can have our Foreign Relations Committee have a meeting at the end of this week. It was asked whether it would be ready for Saturday or Monday and I suggested Friday. In case I arrive according to plan on Thursday, I should be able to have it on Friday, then I think that we could have it in Parliament the following Tuesday or Wednesday. Then, of course, my job will be to speed it up as much as possible, but it may take two or three days in Parliament.

Kilde: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v04/d111> (FRUS, 1949, bind IV, s. 210-213)